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IDENTICAL LETTERS DATED 6 MAY 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 6 May 1997 addressed to you by Mr. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, concerning continuing Turkish acts of military aggression against Iraq's territory and airspace.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Identical letters dated 6 May 1997 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

I refer to my letter of 15 April 1997 concerning the continuing violations of the territory and airspace of the Republic of Iraq being committed by Turkish armed forces (S/1997/318, annex) and should like to inform you that, on a variety of pretexts, such forces are still engaging in military operations inside Iraq's territory and in its airspace. The particulars are set forth hereunder.

1. The Turkish armed forces in the border strip, consisting of some 100,000 to 120,000 troops and large numbers of armoured personnel carriers and tanks, have begun preparations for an offensive against locations inside Iraqi territory. The movement of traffic, and particularly of Turkish trucks, through the Khabur crossing has been adversely affected because of these same Turkish military concentrations.

2. On 27 April 1997 units of the Turkish armed forces penetrated into the territory of the Republic of Iraq in the area between Sharanish and Qasrok, and they are still in position inside Iraqi territory. At the same time, Turkish fighter aircraft carried out a heavy aerial bombardment of areas in the border strip.

3. From 1550 hours on 28 April 1997 Turkish aircraft entered the airspace of the Republic of Iraq, and there were nine sorties by Turkish fighter aircraft in the Pibu, Aqrah, Amadiyah and Ayn Siffin areas. This aerial activity ceased at 1740 hours on the same day.

4. From 1105 hours on 29 April 1997 Turkish aircraft entered the airspace of the Republic of Iraq, and there were 10 sorties by Turkish fighter aircraft, penetrating to a depth of 18 kilometres, in the Zakho, Dohuk, Irbil, Mosul North areas. This aerial activity ceased on the same day.

5. On 30 April 1997 units from the Turkish armed forces penetrated into the territory of the Republic of Iraq to a depth of 10 kilometres. On the same day, the Turkish air force formations listed hereunder entered the airspace of the Republic of Iraq at the times indicated and there were four sorties by Turkish fighter aircraft:

(a) At 1120 hours a Turkish fighter aircraft entered the airspace of the Republic of Iraq in the Sharanish and Batufah areas. This aerial activity ceased at 1138 hours on the same day;

(b) At 1204 hours a formation consisting of two fighter aircraft entered the airspace of the Republic of Iraq in the Pibu and Amadiyah areas. This aerial activity ceased at 1234 hours on the same day.

In conveying to you the details of these Turkish violations, the Government of Iraq expresses its condemnation of such acts of military aggression. It does so because the practices of the Turkish forces, as represented by their repeated shelling of towns and villages in Iraq and their unlawful incursions into Iraqi territory, are in flagrant violation of Iraq's sovereignty and the inviolability of its territory and airspace, just as they are incompatible with relations of good-neighbourliness, the Charter of the United Nations, the norms of international law and the 1926 Iraq-Turkey boundary agreement. These practices may also undermine stability in the region as a whole, which is suffering primarily from the anomalous situation created by the United States of America and its allies in northern Iraq.

As stated in my previous letter, the Turkish Government bears full international responsibility for the acts of aggression it commits inside Iraqi territory and for all their consequences, regardless of the alleged reasons it gives.

The Government of Iraq reserves its legitimate right under international law to respond to these actions and to seek compensation for the damage caused by these Turkish violations of its territory and its airspace and for the human suffering inflicted on Iraqi citizens by these actions. Through you, it renews its call to the Government of Turkey to reconsider its policy with respect to the situation in northern Iraq, to promote the collaboration of the two countries on the basis of considerations of good-neighbourliness and mutual respect for sovereignty and to eliminate the reasons for the persistence of a situation that jeopardizes the interests of both countries.

As, through you, I reiterate my country's call to its Turkish neighbour to respect Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity, I express the hope that the United Nations will meet its responsibilities as laid down in the Charter and that it will halt the intimidation and aggression to which my country is constantly being subjected.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mohammed Said AL-SAHAF
Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Iraq